



Mohegan
Tribe

**Testimony of
James Gessner, Chairman
The Mohegan Tribe**

**Before the Appropriations Committee
On SB 452, An Act Concerning the Mashantucket-Pequot and Mohegan Fund**

Friday, March 25, 2022

The Mohegan Tribe welcomes the opportunity to comment on SB 452, An Act Concerning the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan Fund.

Centuries ago, our ancestors forged strong and lasting relationships with the state that have allowed us to grow and prosper here in Southeastern Connecticut. In the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect we have worked together -- government to government -- and have positioned Mohegan Gaming and Entertainment as an industry leader and driver of economic growth, something that is critical to our Tribe, our region and our state.

As we begin our discussion, I am reminded of something our late Chief Ralph Sturges said shortly after being granted federal recognition. "...until now, they were living in the past. They had nothing but their history. Now, they are living in the future. Now, they can make history."

Today, we represent one of the largest sources of revenue for the state of Connecticut, second only to the federal government. The Mohegan Tribe plays a critical role in the state's \$16 billion tourism industry, driving millions of visitors to the state annually, and purchases hundreds of millions of dollars in goods and services from over 700 Connecticut businesses.

We take pride in our commitment to our communities and what our casino operation has enabled our tribal government to do, not only for our tribal members, but for our neighbors, the region and the state. Keep in mind that these figures don't even begin to address the indirect revenue associated with our operations or the array of community projects and programs we support each year. Maintaining a commitment to the community and being good neighbors is the Mohegan Way and dates back centuries. This sense of community is maintained in every aspect of our operation.

While we are particularly proud of the jobs and economic benefits we have created here in southeastern Connecticut, a vital part of our partnership has been the funds we have been able to share with the state. Since signing our compact, **The Mohegan Tribe has transferred over \$4.1 Billion to the state of Connecticut.** It is important to note that our existing agreement is the highest percentage of revenue sharing of all existing Tribal-State compacts in the United States. The modernization of gaming that was passed last session, with your support and leadership, will only serve to enhance our contributions to Connecticut.

The Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan Fund, distributes direct grants to municipalities in our state. At its highest point, \$135 million in grants were shared with all 169 of Connecticut's cities and towns between 1998 and 2000. The amount distributed through the Fund has fluctuated over the years to its lowest level today of \$51 million.

Given the revenue shared each year under our compacts, combined with the new revenue from sports wagering and gaming, we strongly support increasing the money distributed to all Connecticut towns and encourage a higher percentage to be shared with our neighbors here in Southeastern Connecticut.

Preserving the life and culture that our forbearers worked so hard to establish remains our mission today. This, balanced with the shared respect and open communication between our respective governments, has enabled us all to succeed over the last twenty-six years. Together, we have accomplished great things for the citizens of Connecticut and increasing the distributions to all municipalities will only serve to improve our collective accomplishments.